companies selling weapon-systems and fighter planes held talks with India recently, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the American companies are in the race for having deals in billions with India;

(c) if so, the main reasons therefor; and

(d) details of the amount in billion dollars spent by Government on purchasing army equipments and out of which the purchase made from America in dollars?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Government is aware that certain American companies have held informal discussion regarding India's interest in acquiring modern weapon systems.

(d) Details of the Government expenses on purchase of arms had weapon systems are classified in nature and it would not be in the national interest to divulge them on the Floor of the House.

Middlemen in defence deals

2315. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that countrary to formal orders, middlemen are still thriving in defence deals of the Government;

(b) if so, reasons therefor and Government's reaction thereto; and

(d) steps proposed to eliminate completely the agency system in defence purchases?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Defence Procurement Procedure 2005 followed for capital acquisition allows direct dealing with Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs)/ Authorized Vendors/ Government sponsored Export Agencies (Applicable in case of countries where domestic laws do not permit direct exports by OEMs). Further the procedure incorporates several provisions to ensure transparency and cut down dealys in the procurement process. Some of these provisions include the following:—

(i) Making Qualitative Requirements more broad based so as to avoid single vendor situations.

(ii) Direct offsets and Integrity Pact as part of the Request for Proposal (RFP) for purchases over Rs. 300 crore.

(iii) Standard contract terms upfront as part of the RFP. This includes provision regarding penalty for use of undue influence by the seller and prohibit engagement of any agent or payment of agency commissions by the seller.

(iv) Broad timeframe for completion of different procurement activities.

Recruitment at Officer Level

† 2316. SHRI SURESH BHARDWAJ: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that problem is being faced with respect to new recruitment at officer level;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Government are considering to formulate a new scheme to attract competent youths into army?

THE MINITSER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) There has been no problem in filling up the required vacancies for new induction at the officers' level However, in view of the increasing competition from the corporate world, steps like Image Projection Campaign, enhanced interaction with the youth which Government wishes to attract to the Armed Forces, implementation of the Ajai Vikram Singh Committee recommendations and raising of additional Service Selection Boards, have been initiated.

Expiry of lease of Annadel ground, Shimla

†2317. SHRI SURESH BHARDWAJ: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Annadel ground in Shimla was leased out to army for a period of 99 years and the period of this lease has expired;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.